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Walking a Tightrope: The dynamics of coordinating intra-organizational networks of practice

With the ever increasing globalization, the knowledge economy, and the rise in ICT that is becoming increasingly interwoven with organizing processes, the issue of how to integrate dispersed knowledge is becoming of utmost importance to the survival of many organizations. The studies presented in this dissertation expose how knowledge sharing and organizational learning processes in distributed contexts may take shape within intra-organizational Networks of Practice (NOPs). Coordinating these networks in which people voluntarily share knowledge around their shared practices within a hierarchical setting, induces the unique challenge of reconciling 'firm-based' coordination principles with 'community-based' coordination principles. Studying the dynamics of coordinating NOPs from the perspective of management, leadership and core members, revealed that the main challenge of coordinating intra-organizational NOPs is to balance between the often conflicting practice-related interests of the network members, and the organizational level interests to institutionalize learning outcomes in the organization. This dissertation contributes to both theory and practice by illuminating how coordinating NOPs resembles walking a tightrope and by unraveling the dynamics integral to keeping your balance.

About the author:

Marlous Agterberg was a Ph.D. Candidate at the KIN research group of the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, VU University Amsterdam. She is currently working at the same research group as assistant professor in Knowledge, Information and Networks. Her research interests include (online) knowledge networks, participation and learning in new organizational forms, and managing emergent types of collaboration.

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